

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PLAYING CARD GAME

5 BACKGROUND

10 This invention relates to an electronic card game that increases player enjoyment and participation. Electronic card games have become extremely popular in casinos and other establishments where gambling is authorized. The popularity of these games is based upon a combination of the games' aesthetic appearance as well as the game itself, including the rules and payout table of the game. One of the most popular types of electronic card games is electronic or video poker, of which there are many different varieties, i.e. Joker Poker, Acey Deucey, Deuces Wild, Jacks or Better, and many others. The majority of video poker games are based upon a basic five card draw poker game, wherein the player is dealt an initial hand of five cards and then
15 may elect to discard up to three cards, which are replaced with new cards to form a five card poker hand. The player is then paid any winnings in accordance with a set pay table.

20 Another gambling card game, that has not caught on in casinos, either electronically or otherwise, is Red Dog. In Red Dog, also called In Between and other names in other parts of the world, a player places a wager and is shown two cards face up. The player then is given the opportunity to place an additional wager on whether or not a third card will fall between the first two cards dealt. Variations on these games are disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,547,246 and 6,406,024. The betting options in Red Dog are straightforward and lack much variety. Similarly, in poker games, a player has a single bet and then draws cards in order to attempt to
25 establish a winning hand for that bet.

The present invention provides a fast moving game that provides the player with up to five betting options in a single card game. The game is easy to understand, allowing the player to play the game quickly with minimal instruction.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

35 An electronic card game is disclosed wherein a player makes a bet and is dealt two cards face up. The player is provided the option of choosing one of up to five ranges wherein the next card may fall. Those five possible ranges are: lower than the first two cards; equal to the lowest of the first two cards; higher than the lowest of the first two cards and lower than the highest of the first two cards; equal to the highest of the first two cards; or higher than both cards. The player then selects that range wherein he believes the next, third, card will fall; each range having a specific prize value associated with it. After the player selects a range, a third card is dealt and the player
40 is paid if the third card falls in the selected range. Variations on the invention allow for bonuses to be paid if the third card falls in the middle of the selected range or is of the same rank as one or both of the first two cards.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a depiction of a display of the game having 13 separate spaces for each of the 13 ranks of playing cards where the first two cards, a four and a Queen, have been drawn and are shown on the display.

FIG. 1A shows the five ranges wherein the third card may fall, and therein the player may bet that the third card will fall, based on the initial deal of FIG. 1.

FIG. 2 is a depiction of the four portions of the display screen in a preferred embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 3 shows the Range Selection portion of the display screen, which displays five possible ranges for the third cards, based upon an initial deal of a four and a ten.

FIG. 4 shows a preferred pay table for the game, including bonus pays for the middle card(s) in certain ranges.

FIG. 5 shows a standard poker button set modified in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 6 displays the Range Selection portion of the display, including possible payment amounts, for an initial deal of two threes.

FIG. 7 displays the Range Selection portion of the display, including possible payment amounts, for an initial deal of a two and a three.

FIG. 8 is a depiction of the Range Display portion of the display where the initial deal is a seven and a ten and a bonus is available for the middle card of the LOWER range.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The game of the present invention may be played on a standard type gaming platform with a place for the player to insert money, tokens or tickets, buttons and/or a touchscreen for the player to control the operation of the game, a display screen, and the additional lights, bells and signage such that the game is attractively displayed. Such gaming platforms are well known in the industry, as are the computer software and hardware on which a game such as that of the present invention may be programmed, displayed and played.

Play of the present invention is initiated by making a wager. Two cards are then dealt face up and displayed in the appropriate areas of the display. For example, in FIG. 1 it can be seen that the first two cards dealt are a four and a Queen. The card suit is not necessarily important to the basic game, although variations of the game can easily be envisioned wherein the suit of the cards dealt may be a factor. After the first two cards are dealt the player is provided with the opportunity to select the range in which the next card dealt will fall. That range may be the cards that are of a lower rank than both of the first two cards dealt; the card of the same rank as the

lowest card dealt; the cards having a rank between the two cards dealt; the card of the same rank as the highest card dealt; or the cards having a higher rank than the highest card dealt. Those five ranges are also shown on the display, as in FIG. 1A. If the player selects the range in which the third card falls, he is awarded a payout, preferably based upon the amount wagered.

FIG. 2 shows a video game screen in a preferred embodiment of the present invention (20). The video screen is separated into four portions. A first portion (21), contains a standard poker layout of meters and buttons, modified such that the five hold keys are associated with each of five specific ranges in which the third card may fall. A second Range Display portion (22), preferably located above the first portion, consists of 13 areas (23) for each of the 13 card ranks in a standard deck of playing cards, two through Ace. These 13 areas are displayed as etched or recessed areas such that the cards, as dealt, appear to fit into the depressions. A third Range Selection portion (24), preferably above the second portion of the screen, displays up to five range choice areas. A fourth portion (25), displays a pay table.

FIG. 1A shows a depiction of the portion of the screen that displays each of the 13 card ranks (22) and also five ranges wherein the third card may be dealt if the initial two cards dealt are a four and a Queen. The player may be shown the five possible areas for the third card to fall into in the way shown in FIG. 1A, or in any imaginative way, such as by different colored lights, alternating blinking areas, or some other such display. As shown in FIG. 1A, the four (11) and the Queen (12) are displayed in their respective areas of the 13 card range display portion of the display. The five possible ranges wherein the third card may fall may be highlighted with different colors and/or light intensities circling all the cards in the respective range. For example in FIG. 1A, the first range, cards of a rank lower than four may be highlighted in blue (13), the four may be highlighted in yellow (14), cards of a rank in between a four and a ten might be highlighted in red (15), the ten might be highlighted in green (16) and cards of a rank higher than ten might be highlighted in orange (17). Of course, other colors or methods of highlighting the card ranges may be utilized as well.

The two drawn cards will also be shown in the range choice or range selection section of the screen (24). FIG. 3 shows the range choice or range selection section of the display when the initial deal is a four and a ten. The five possible ranges are again displayed and highlighted. Those ranges are: LOWER (31), which in this example where the initial deal is a four and a ten would consist of cards of the rank two or three; MATCH (32), which consists of the remaining cards in the deck having a rank of four; MIDDLE (33), which consists of cards having a rank between four and ten, namely cards of the rank six, seven, eight, and nine; MATCH (34), which consists of the remaining cards in the deck having a rank of ten; and HIGHER (35), which consists of cards of the rank higher than ten, namely Jack, Queen, King and Ace. The pay multiples for each of the five possible ranges may also be displayed (36).

The player is provided with a pay table based upon the number of cards in each range and therefore the likelihood that such card will be drawn. By way of example only, a preferred pay table is shown in FIG. 4. The pay table is preferably based upon the number of credits bet, as well as the number of cards in a range.

After the first two cards are dealt and the ranges are displayed, the player chooses the range in which he thinks the next card will fall, taking into consideration the possible payoffs based upon the pay table. The player may preferably select a range via either a touchscreen that allows the player to touch his chosen range on the Range Choice portion of the display (24) or via buttons on the gaming machine (21). These buttons may be the standard hold buttons for a video poker machine, modified to instead display the potential ranges: LOWER, MATCH LOWER, MIDDLE, MATCH HIGHER, and HIGHER. The button display of a preferred embodiment is shown in FIG. 5 (51).

After the player selects his range via either the touchscreen (24) or the buttons (41), he presses a deal or draw button (42) or otherwise signals the game to deal the third card. The third card is then dealt and evaluated and the player is paid in accordance with the pay table and whether or not he chose the correct range. For instance, if the player selects the LOWER range in our example with the four and the ten as initial cards and the third card dealt is a two, the player would be paid 6 times her initial bet. If the player had selected any other range, there would be no payout. Other payout formulas are of course available, but the preferred embodiment involves a payout that is a multiple of the initial amount bet.

The overall game play can be quite quick with each initial deal having variable prize values based upon that deal. This allows the player to select his or her own level of volatility for play. For instance, a player may consistently bet on the largest possible range, with a commensurately smaller payoff amount, if he or she desires the largest number of wins. Alternatively, a player may choose to bet on the smallest range(s) in order to maximize her payout if a win does occur. This flexibility makes the game attractive for a wide range of players and will keep game interest high during play, thereby increasing the length of time players play the game.

As a result of the first deal there may be certain instances where there are less than five ranges. For example if the initial deal is a two and an Ace, there can be no card lower than the lowest card or higher than the highest card. Therefore, there are only three ranges for this initial deal; between the two and the Ace, equal to the two or equal to the Ace. In this circumstance, the Range Display and Range Choice displays, and the player selection options are adjusted accordingly.

In addition, if the two cards dealt initially are identical, for example two sevens, there can be no "in-between" range. Further, if the initial two cards are both twos or both aces there can be no lower than or higher than range, respectively, as well. Again, Range Choice displays and player range selection options are altered in these situations to reflect only the available ranges. An initial deal of two threes and the resulting possible ranges, as displayed on the Range Choice display, are shown in FIG. 6. In certain embodiments of the game a bonus may be awarded for an initial deal of two cards of the same rank, a pair. In addition, alternatively, if a player is dealt an initial pair, she may be awarded a high payout if she bets that the third card will be of the same rank, and it is.

FIG. 7 displays the range choice screen when the initial deal is a two and a three. In this case there is no LOWER range and no MIDDLE range. In a preferred embodiment, when the initial two cards are adjacent, such as a two and a three, an EITHER range option is provided (71). The

EITHER range allows the player to wager that the third card will be either the first or the second card dealt. This provides an alternate range selection option since the MIDDLE range is not available with adjacent cards.

- 5 The game may also be modified so that the middle card or cards in a range have a bonus associated with them. In a preferred embodiment, the middle card(s) of any range consisting of five, seven, eight, nine, ten and eleven cards would have a bonus; as can be seen from the sample pay table in FIG. 4. In this way, if the player selects one of these ranges of cards, she is awarded a bonus if the third card is a bonus card in the middle of that range.

10 FIG. 8 shows the Range display with an initial deal of a seven and a ten. The five possible ranges, LOWER (81), MATCH LOWER (82), MIDDLE (83), MATCH HIGHER (84) and HIGHER (85) are highlighted in various ways. In addition, the middle card of the five card LOWER range, in this case the four (86) is additionally highlighted as a middle bonus card. If
15 the player selects the LOWER range and the third card is a four, the player is paid a bonus, in addition to his award for selecting the correct range.

The game described above may be modified in various ways in order to provide more game options. In one embodiment, multiple hands of the game are played from a single deck of cards.
20 In this way, the odds may increase or decrease for specific pays as the cards are dealt; or, alternatively, the pay table may be reduced to account for the player's ability to increase his or her return by factoring into their play the previously dealt cards.

In another embodiment of the present invention the game may award the player a bonus for selecting a specific card in the selected range of cards. For example if the first two cards are a four and a Queen, a player that not only specified the range in between the two cards, but which
25 also specified a seven, for example, would receive an additional payout for selecting the actual third card. In addition to receiving a bonus for selecting the correct third card, bonuses can be awarded for other events. For instance, if the first two cards dealt are the same suit a bonus
30 could be awarded if the third card is of the same suit as the first two cards. The permutations are nearly endless.

As those skilled in the relevant art would know, the invention can be embodied in numerous forms of media such as, but not limited to, single player video slot machines, multi-player video slot machines, electronic games and devices, scratch-card formats, lottery terminals, software, as
35 well as in-flight, home and Internet entertainment. The invention can readily be implemented as a computer program on a compact disc, DVD, etc. comprising a computer readable medium with recorded controlled logic to implement the features of the invention. Control logic can be loaded into the memory of a computer and executed by a central processing unit (CPU) to perform the
40 various operations described herein.

The embodiments of the game set forth above are meant to teach certain aspects of the invention, including the best mode of implementation. Those embodiments, however, are offered by way of example only. The invention itself is not to be limited by any specific embodiment, but
45 encompasses all embodiments, whether specifically described or not, and as disclosed in the following claims: